

*The great Duty of Universal Love and Charity*

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A  
**SERMON**

Preached before the

**QUEEN,**

At St. JAMES'S CHAPEL.

On Sunday December the 30th, 1705.

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By Samuel Clarke, M.A. Chaplain to the Right Reverend  
Father in God. JOHN Lord Bishop of Norwich.

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I JOHN IV. 21.

*And this Commandment have we from him, that he who  
loveth God, love his Brother also.*

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## I JOHN IV. 21.

*And this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.*

**T**HE true End and Design of Religion, is manifestly this; to make Men wiser and better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their Nature; to teach them to obey, and love, and imitate God; to cause them to extend their Love and Goodness and Charity to all their Fellow-Creatures, each in their several Stations, and according to the measure of their several Abilities; in like manner as the universal Goodness of God, extends it self over all his Works through the whole Creation; And to oblige them to govern the Passions of their Mind, with Moderation; and the Appetites of their Body, with Temperance. This is plainly the chief End and Design of true Religion: And whoever acts contrary to all or any of these great Rules, by wilfully dishonouring God, by hating his Brother, or by abusing and corrupting himself; is either a false and hypocritical Professour of the Truth, if he does these things in contradiction to the plain Rules, and in defiance of the Laws of his Religion; or else the Religion which he professes, is itself a false and corrupt Religion, if he does any of these things in compliance with the Principles, and by permission of the Laws thereof. The Religion of the Church of *Rome* is therefore a false and corrupt Religion; because, as it dishonours God by mixing Idolatry with Divine Worship, and gives Men too much encouragement to corrupt *Themselves*, and to indulge their vicious Inclinations and Habits, by allowing them, through many Superstitious Rites, to reconcile a wicked Life with the Hopes of Heaven, so it *particularly* permits, nay and requires Men to hate and persecute their *Brethren*; And those whom, for want of the Arguments of reason and truth, they are not able to convince and bring over to their party, they endeavour by all the ways of violence and cruelty to root out and



and extirpate from among Men : As if the Religion of Christ was intended to develt Men of common humanity, and the service and glory of God could in good earnest be promoted by the destruction of Mankind. This is one of the greatest Corruptions of an excellent Institution, that can be imagined ; when Religion it self, instead of promoting the universal Peace and Happiness and Welfare of Men, is made to authorise such practises, the prevention whereof is manifestly the chief and greatest End for which any Religion can reasonably be supposed to have been instituted at all. Particular Persons, under the Profession of the best and purest Religion in the World, may be led away with some degrees of this Spirit of Errour ; through a false zeal, and a mistaken judgment ; as some of the *Apostles* themselves were for calling for Fire from Heaven, upon the Samaritans who refused to entertain our Saviour : But the Christian Religion it self, the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of our Saviour, is intirely opposite to this Spirit ; and teaches us nothing but Love and Peace, Meekness and Charity, Patience and Forbearance one towards another. *If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is liar ; For this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.*

In the following Discourse upon which Words, I shall endeavour, *First*, to shew briefly the great Obligation, which lies upon all Men in general, considered as Equals, to practise this Excellent Duty of Love and Meekness, Patience and Forbearance one towards another. And, *Secondly*, I shall consider some of the principal and most remarkable Variations of this Duty, arising from the different Relations and Circumstances that Men stand in one towards another.

I. As to the Obligation which lies upon all Men in general, considered as Equals, to practise this great Duty of universal Love, Meekness and Charity ; 'tis evident.

*1<sup>st</sup>*. That by the original order and constitution of *Nature*, Men are so made and framed, that they necessarily want one anothers Help and Assistance, for their mutual

support and preservation in the World. They cannot subsist, at least they cannot enjoy any Comfort of Life, independently on each other; but are manifestly fitted by the very frame of their Nature, to live in Communities; and Society is absolutely necessary for them; and the Bond of all Society, is mutual Love, Charity and Friendship. Now in this respect, all Men naturally stand upon the same level; they have all the same natural wants and desires; they are all in the same need of each others assistance, and are equally capable of enjoying the benefits and advantages of Society. 'Tis manifest therefore, that every Man, as he is a Man, is bound by the Law of his Nature, by common *Humanity*, to look upon himself as a part or member of that one universal Body or Community which, is made up of all Mankind; to think himself born and sent into the World, on purpose, to promote the publick Good and Welfare of all his Fellow-Creatures; and consequently obliged, as the necessary and only effectual means to that End, to embrace them All with universal Love, Charity and Benevolence.

And as all Men are obliged to this, by the necessary *Law and Condition* of their Being, and by all the outward *Circumstances* of the present State, wherein God has placed them; so they are also strongly prompted to it by the *natural Inclinations* of their own Minds, when not corrupted by the practise of Vice. For by Nature Men are plainly disposed to be kind, and friendly, and willing to do good; Nothing is naturally more agreeable and pleasant to the Mind of Man, than being helpful and beneficial one to another; And, did they not suffer Covetousness and Revenge, and other foolish and absurd Passions, unreasonably to overrule this their natural Disposition; they would universally enjoy the happy Fruits and Effects of it. For even in the present most corrupt estate of the World, as far as their Vices will permit, Men still desire to keep up a general Commerce and Communication with each other; they love to increase their Dependencies, by multiplying Affinities; and to enlarge their Friendships, by mutual good Offices;



Offices ; and to establish Societies, by a Communication of Arts and Labour and Industry. The only possible means of preserving which Societies, in any tolerable and durable manner, being the practise of mutual Love, and universal Charity and Benevolence ; shows plainly what the direction and tendency of uncorrupted Nature is.

No Man therefore can, without transgressing both the plain *Law* of his Being, and also acting contrary to the Reason of his own Mind and the natural *Inclination* of his uncorrupted Affections, do willingly any hurt or mischief to any Man ; but every one is obliged for the publick Benefit, to endeavour to do good to all, and to love all Men even as himself ; and, upon what occasion soever any misunderstandings or provocations may happen to arise, he ought immediately to endeavour to appease with gentleness, rather than exasperate with retaliations ; and put an end to all differences, as soon as possibly he can. By this means the World would become as happy, as 'tis possible for Men in this present State of imperfection to be : And nothing hinders Mankind from arriving actually at this degree of Happiness, but most *perverse* and most *unreasonable Iniquity*.

For, in order to bring about this great and excellent End, *viz.* universal Love and Friendship, and all the happy Effects and Consequences of it ; nothing more is requisite, than that Men do to others in all respects, what they would reasonably desire that others should in like Circumstances do to them. This is all that is really meant by loving others as themselves ; And thus much they are manifestly obliged to, by the plainest *Equity*, and by the clearest *Reason* in the World. Every Man is desirous, and thinks it highly reasonable, that others should deal with *Him*, according to the Rules of Equity, Humanity, and Friendship ; that they should be tender of his Life, Estate, and Reputation ; that in matters of Commerce, they should treat him with Justice, Fairness and Truth ; that in things wherein he stands in need of their Assistance, and has good ground to expect it, they should be willing to

relieve him according to their Power; that in case of ignorance or mistake, they should be ready to inform him; and where he has given any Offense, to forgive him upon his desire of Reconciliation. This every Man thinks reasonable in his *own* case; and therefore he is undeniably bound to think it reasonable likewise, when ever it be *another Mans* case to expect the like from *him*. And if he does not act according to this judgment; he is manifestly guilty of such Iniquity and Unrighteousness, as nothing but Custom in Wickedness and the Number of Evil Examples could be able to support Men under, and harden them in the practise of it, against the Shame and Self-condemnation of their own Minds. For, what is in it self fit and right to be done, every Mans own Conscience plainly tells him; and, whensoever he gives himself time seriously to consider and review his Actions, it accordingly either applauds and commends him, and affords him great pleasure and satisfaction, from the sense of his having answered the chief ends of his Creation, and complied with the highest Obligations of his Nature, in having indeavoured to promote the universal Welfare and Happiness of Mankind, by the practise of Truth and Righteousness, Meekness, Goodness and Charity; or else, on the other side, it cannot but secretly reproach and severely condemn him, for having acted the contrary part. Which Judgment of Conscience, though Men may indeed conceal from the World, and dissemble their Sense of the weight of it upon their own Mind, in respect of their *own Actions*; yet it always discovers it self in the Censures they pass upon the *Actions of Others*. For, how much wickedness and uncharitableness, or pride and contentiousness soever, Men can overlook in *themselves*; yet there is no Man, but in judging of *others*, where his own Interest and Passions are not concerned, will rightly enough distinguish concerning the characters of Persons, and the true value of Mens Actions; will give just applause and commendation, to Men of meek and peaceable and quiet Spirits, Lovers of Mankind, such as delight to do good, and to make All about them as easy  
and



and happy as they can ; and, on the contrary, will freely condemn the promoters of Hatred, Animosity and Contention. All which plainly shows, both what the Law of our Nature, and what the original Inclinations of our Affections are, when not corrupted with the practise of Vice.

2. As all Men are obliged thus by the necessary *Circumstances and Condition* of their Being, and also by the *original and natural Inclinations* of their own Minds, to Love and to do Good to each other, according to their several Powers and Abilities: So they are still further and more strictly obliged to the Practise of the same Duty, in *Imitation* of the *Nature*, and in *Obedience* to the *Will and Law* of God, *God Himself is Love*, ( 1 John 4. 8. ) as the Apostle stiles him ; an infinite and inexhaustible Fountain of never-failing Goodness. Who, being infinitely and eternally happy in the injoyment of his own unspeakable perfections, could have no other Motive to create things at first, but only that he might communicate his goodness and happiness to his Creatures ; and continues to preserve them for no other reason, but that he may still continue to do good to them. *He maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust :* ( Matt. 5. 45. ) *Giving us from Heaven fruitful Seasons, and filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* ( Acts 14. 17. ) Now for the same reason that God does *Himself* continually delight in doing Good, and seems always to take especial pleasure in describing himself by that particular Attribute of Love and Goodness ; for the same reason it must necessarily be his Will, that all reasonable Creatures should imitate him in that Excellent perfection ; and, by the Practise of mutual Love and Charity, permit and assist each other to enjoy in particular the several Effects and Blessings of the Divine Universal Goodness. God cannot but be pleased with such, who endeavour to conform themselves to the likeness of his Divine Nature, and make it their business, according to the extent of their Power, and the measure of their several Abilities, to promote the welfare and happiness of all their fellow-creatures ; in like manner as the Love and Goodness and Mercy

of God, extends it self universally over all his works through the whole Creation. He has given us noble Powers and Faculties on purpose, to inable us to imitate him in the exercise of these excellent Attributes: He has endued us with Reason and Understanding, for that very End; that we might be able to discern between Good and Evil, and learn to choose the One and avoid the Other: He has implanted in our Minds such Affections and Dispositions, as naturally incline us to be *kind and friendly and charitable* one towards another: He has so framed and constituted our Nature, and so ordered the Circumstances of our present State, as to make Society and Friendship necessary to the support and comfort of Life; on purpose that Men might be continually exercised in the Practise of these divine Virtues: He has interwoven the Interest of Men, and made the Happiness of every particular Person depend upon the Welfare of the Publick; that each one, from the Sense of his own Want and Exigencies, might see the reasonableness and necessity of making it is principal business to do good to others: In fine; He has given us no other way of expressing so acceptable our Love and Gratitude to Himself, whom we *have not seen*; (1 Job 4. 21.) as by Loving and doing good to our Brethren, whom *we have seen*: For *no Man as seen God at any time*; (1 John 4. 12. & 13.) But *if we Love one another, hereby we know that God, tho' invisible, yet really dwelleth in us, and that his love is perfected in us, and that we dwell in him and he in us, because we are Imitators of his Nature and Partakers of his Spirit.* And thus much is clear, even from the bare Light of Nature it self.

But then, 3<sup>dly</sup>, The Christian Religion carries our obligation to the practise of this Excellent Duty, still much higher. We are *Now* obliged to love and to do good to one another, not only by the ties of common humanity, as we are Men, and partakers of the same common Nature; but we are further to look upon our selves as Brethren in a more peculiar and eminent manner, being all the Children of God in Christ, all members at the same Body, all partakers of the same Spirit, all Heirs of the same blessed Hope

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of Immortality. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of all. ( Eph. 4. 4. )* Wherefore I beseech you, saith the Apostle, *that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ; With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ( Eph. 4. 1. )*

Again : We Christians, have not only the Example of Gods Love and Goodness in *general* proposed to our Imitation, as these excellent Attributes of the Divine Nature are made known to Us by right Reason, and by the Light of Nature, and by our continual Experience of that good Providence, which presides over all, and does good to all, and manifests it self daily in all the works of God through the whole Creation : But we have moreover the Example of God's goodness and loving kindness manifested to us in a more *particular* and extraordinary manner, in that singular Instance of the Redemption of mankind by the Death of his Son ; Of which exceeding great and undeserved mercy, we being all partakers, and having all our hopes of happiness founded upon it, are consequently under the strongest Obligation possible, to be in our proportion kind and merciful and charitable to our *Brethren*, as God has been infinitely good and merciful to *Us*. This Argument is strongly urged by the Apostle St. Paul, Col. 3. 12. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man has a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye : And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness ; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body.*

Lastly ; As we are Christians, we are obliged to Love and to do good to each other ; not only by our knowing in *general*, from the consideration of the Divine Nature and Attributes, that it must needs be agreeable to the Will of God, that we should do so ; but by having moreover received it, with singular inforcement, as the *peculiar Law* and

and Command of your Saviour, on which he insists particularly, and seems to recommend it above all others, as the most absolutely necessary and indispensable Qualification of a sincere Christian. *A new commandment*, saith he, *I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*; John 13. 34. And he makes it as it were the distinguishing mark and badge of his Disciples: *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*. He himself, while he was here upon Earth, *went continually about, doing good*; and in so doing he has set us an example, wherein he indispensably requires that we should follow his Steps. And accordingly we find the Apostles every where declaring, that universal Love and Charity, is the End of the Commandment, the principal aim and design of our whole Religion, 1 Tim. 1. 5. *That he that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the Law*; For that all the Commandments are briefly comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, Rom. 13. 8. And again; *That all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, Gal. 5. 14. Insomuch that whosoever wants this excellent Virtue; all his other pretenses of Religion whatsoever, and of zeal for the Service of God, are declared to be vain and of no value. *If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a Liar*, 1 John 4. 20. And St. Paul in like manner; *Though I speak*, saith he, *with the tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity; I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; that is, all my pretenses to religion are false and empty: *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove mountains; and have no Charity; I am nothing: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my body to be burned; and have not Charity; it profiteth me nothing*; 1 Cor. 13. 1. And the reason why so particular a stress is laid upon the practise of this great Duty of universal Love and Charity, is plain. Namely, because it is That Temper and Disposition of Mind, which is the highest possible improvement and perfection of our rational Nature; 'Tis that  
which



which makes our Souls like unto God, who is Goodness itself; 'Tis That which in the nature of the Thing it self is of the last and utmost importance, as being naturally and necessarily the condition and ground both of our present Happiness and of that which is to come: 'Tis a Qualification of Mind absolutely necessary, to make us capable of the *Sight* of God, and of the *Happiness* of Heaven: For we must be *like* God, if we will *see him as he is*; And we must first attain that Disposition of Mind, wherein the Happiness of Heaven essentially consists; if we will hope to be partakers of that Happiness: In a word, that fram of Mind which enclines us to do good, and to take delight in doing it, is itself the Temper and Disposition of Happiness; and without this, 'tis no more possible for a rational Creature to be made Happy, than it is to alter the Nature and Essences, the necessary and eternal Reason and Proportion of Things. This is the plain and necessary reason, why Love and Charity and Goodness, are constantly preferred before all other Virtues; as being the ultimate End and Design of Religion, and themselves a principal and necessary Ingredient of the Joys of Heaven. Almost All other Virtues, or Gifts and Excellencies whatsoever, are but as Means to this End; and to be *done away*, *when that which is perfect is come*. *Hope*, is but the present Expectation, and *Faith* the firm Belief, of those things which shall be made manifest hereafter; and when that comes to pass, then These virtues, and all other gifts which are in order to these, must necessarily and of course cease. *Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: 1 Cor. 13. 8.* But *Charity* and *Goodness*, *never fail*: These are dispositions of mind, which are begun in the *Virtues* of *this* life, and compleated in the *Glory* of the *next*; which will grow up the improvements of our Knowledge and Virtue here, to a perfect and unspeakable Happiness in the enjoyments of the World to come.

And now, could any Man, who seriously considered these things, and was unacquainted with the Practise of the World,

World, believe it possible, that Men who professed that Holy Religion which so plainly teaches this doctrine of Peace, should yet, so directly contrary to the whole End and design of the Religion of Christ, (as is too plainly the practise of the Chief Propagators of the Romish Faith,) indulgetheir Lusts, their Passions, their Pride, their Covetousness, their Ambition so far, as not only to be the cause of Envyings, Strifes and Contentions, but even to make *Wars and Fightings* (*Jam. 4. 1.*) necessary among Christians? to the infinite Scandal of our most holy Religion, in the sight of Jews, and Turks, and Pagans; among whom *the Name of God is blasphemed, through Us, as it is written; Rom. 2. 24.* Could such a one believe it possible, if it was not too manifest in experience, that Men who call themselves Christians, should oppress and bite and devour one another, and not be afraid of the Apostles threatning, that they should be consumed one of another? (*Gal. 5. 15.*) And is it not still much more absurd, that Religion *it self*, that the Religion of Christ, the Religion of Peace and Love, which was intended to reconcile Men to God and to each other; should it self be made the occasion of Hatred, Animosities and Contentions; nay, of the greatest Oppressions and most inhumane Cruelties? In a word, That Pretenses of Religion *it self*, should produce in Men that Spirit, for the preventing whereof all Religion was principally and ultimately intended? I shall conclude this Head with those remarkable words of the Apostle St. James, *Jam. 3. 13. Who is a wise Man, and indued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his Works with meekness of Wisdom; But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth; This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work; But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, &c.*

II. It remains that we proceed in the 2<sup>d</sup> place to consider briefly some of the principal *Variations* of this great Duty, arising from the different Relations and Circum-



cumstances which Men stand in One towards another.

And here the Practise of this Duty is *diversified* as many ways, as there are different Stations, or different Circumstances and Conditions of Men in the World. I shall only mention these following; from which all the rest may easily be deduced.

1<sup>st</sup>. What this great Duty of Love and Charity obliges us to, in respect of our behaviour towards *Superiours* and *Inferiours*.

2<sup>dly</sup>. How it obliges us to behave our selves towards our *Enemies*, or those who have done us any particular Injury, And

3<sup>ly</sup>. How it obliges good Men to behave themselves towards those, who are either *neglecters and despisers* of Religion in general, or so unhappy as to be involved in some particular *great and pernicious Errors*.

1<sup>st</sup>. In respect of our behaviour towards *Superiours*, the Duty of *universal Love* is to show forth it self in hearty, willing, and cheerful Obedience to the Commands of those whom God has set over us; in delighting to promote their Honour, and to increase among Men that Duty and Respect, which is due to Authority; In thinking Them that *Rule well, worthy of double Honour*; and (because all Government is a Burden, as well as an Honour; therefore) this duty particularly obliges us to endeavour to make that Burden as light and easy as we can, by a careful and diligent and conscientious discharge of our several Duties, each in our respective Stations; so as unanimously to promote and forward all the End and Designs of good Government, the Execution of wise and wholsom Laws, and the Peace and Prosperity of the Publick.

In respect of our behaviours towards *Inferiours*; the Duty of Christian Love, is to show forth it self in just and righteous and merciful dealings; in readily relieving the Necessities of those that want; in delivering and vindicating the oppressed; in instructing the ignorant and those that are in Error; in reproving the Wicked, and by good example as well as god advice, perswading and bringing them

them to a better mind ; In a word, in doing all the good we can, both to the Souls and Bodies of Men ; in imitation of our Saviour, *who went about doing good.*

Now by how much the greater any Mans Power or Riches or Interest or Authority is, and by how much the higher his Station is in the World ; by so much the greater is his Power of doing good, and by so much the more glorious is his exercising and imploying his Power to that excellent and noble End. And here is the true and immortal Glory of wise and good Princes, that as they represent God in the exercise of Power and Authority in the World, so they resemble him also in the application of that Power to serve the end of Virtue and Goodness in promoting the publick Happiness of Mankind. Power, is not desirable for its own sake, any more than Wisdom and Knowledge ; but only for the sake of that greater Good, which enables Men to do in the World. And to abuse Power to the enslaving and destroying of Mankind, and to the serving such Purposes, the preventing whereof is indeed the only good Reason for which Power is truly desirable ; is the greatest weakness and absurdity in the World. To imploy great Power and Riches, in conquering and subduing many Nations, in causelessly oppressing Multitudes of People, and subverting the common Rights and Liberties of Men ; is the greatest folly, as well as the greatest wickedness, imaginable ; and nothing can be more weak and contrary to reason, than to call that Ambition by the name of Glory and Greatness, which is really the most inglorious and the most dishonourable thing in nature. God is the Supreme Governour of the World, possessed entirely of absolute and uncontrollable Power ; yet he makes use of that Power to no other End, but to preserve and support and do good to all his Creatures, according to their several Natures and Capacities : He *is good, and does good* ; and esteems Goodness his greatest Glory and Perfection, the Title which he most delights to be described by. True greatness therefore, is to imitate God in this most glorious Perfection of Goodness : And those whom he has indued with Power and Authority to represent



sent him on Earth, are then most truly and industriously his Vice-gerents, when they look upon a large extent of Power, to be only a greater compass of doing Good; when they imitate God, in being Lovers and Preservers of Mankind, and making Government a Protection and Security to all that Live under it, And if beyond this, they be still further enabled to restrain the Fury of Oppressours abroad, and to be Vindicators of the common Rights and Liberties of Nations; this is, still a higher degree of true Honour and Greatness, and a becoming really the Praise and Glory of the whole Earth. How unspeakably happy is that people, on whom God has vouchsafed to bestow so inestimable a Blessing! and how thankful ought we to be, that the description of such Felicity, is at this Time the exact description of our own Case!

2ly, In respect of our behaviour towards our *Enemies*, or those who have done us any particular Injury; the Duty of universal Love and Charity, is to show forth it self in a willing and ready disposition to forgive them upon their Repentance and desire of reconciliation. *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him,* Luk. 17. 3. This, we Christians are in a particular manner obliged to, by the Example of Gods much greater Goodness and Compassion towards Us. Since God has forgiven us All, our *ten Thousands Talents*; Matth. 18. 24. nothing can be more reasonable in the nature of the thing it self, then that we should be moved by that example, to forgive one another *freely as hundred Pence*; and to have compassion each on our *fellow-servants*, as God has had pity on Us. But besides the reasonableness of the thing it self, God has moreover made it the express condition of our own enjoying the benefit of His gracious Pardon: *For, so likewise, saith our Saviour, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses,* Matth. 18. 35. And accordingly we are directed even in our daily Prayer, to ask forgiveness at the hands of God; only upon such condition, and in such manner, as we forgive one another our Trespasses. And This, is upon Supposition of our Enemies repenting: But if they do *not* repent; yet even still we are obliged, to *love and bless* them, to *pray* for them, and seek all opportunities of *doing good* to them; after the example of our heavenly Father, who doth good even to the Evil and to the Unthankful. Nevertheless all that is said upon this Head, is to be understood of *private*, not of the *publick* Enemies; against whom neither the Laws of Nature nor of Christianity, have provided any other way of securing our selves, than by endeavouring to deprive them of the *Power* of hurting Us.

Lastly, In respect of the behaviour of Good Men towards those who are either neglecters and despisers of Religion in general, or so unhappy as to be involved in some particular great and pernicious Errors; The Duty of universal Love and Charity, obliges us to endeavour by all the ways of Gentleness, instruction and reproof, to bring them to Repentance and a better Mind. Magistrates indeed, and those who are placed in Authority, may

may and ought to make use of punishment and severity, towards those who are guilty of such Crimes, as are destructive of humane Society ; And the strict Execution of good Laws, is in that case and instance of the greatest Love and Charity to the Publick. But otherwise, it is the Duty of a *Servant of the Lord*, not to strive, but to be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient ; In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth. ( 2 Tim. 2. 24. ) For, the Wrath of Man, worketh not the Righteousness of God ; ( 1 Jam. 20. ) and our Saviour himself severely condemns that Spirit, which some of his Disciples discovered, when they desired to call for Fire from Heaven, upon the *Samaritans* who refused to give him reception. Such persons as are not yet come to have a right Sense of Religion *in general*, it is our Duty to persuade by Reason and Arguments ; to convince them of the Being, Attributes and Providence of God ; of the necessity and infinite importance of Religion ; of the unalterable difference of Good and Evil ; of the reasonableness excellency, and positive Evidence of the Christian Revelation. And those who are so unhappy as to be involved in any *particular* pernicious Errors, it is our Duty to inform, instruct, reprove, and by all Christian means endeavour to bring them back to the acknowledgment of the Truth : Taking care above all things, to show them by our good Examples, and by the influence of the Truth upon our own Lives ; that we have no other design in endeavouring to convince them, but theirs and our own Salvation. In promoting which Ends, we shall do well to have always imprinted on our minds those excellent words, wherewith *St. James* concludes his Epistle : *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him : let him know, that he which converteth the Sinner from the error of his way, shall save a Soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.*

F I N I S.